

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS****REGULAR MEETING****Monday, July 9, 2001**

Present: June Bailey, Glen Dey, Janet Miller, M.S. Mitchell, Trix Niernberger, Leon Robinson, Joe Todd

Also Present: Carl Finch, CEO – Wesley Medical Center; Fran Crowley – Wichita School Board; Joe Johnson – Shaefer, Johnson, Cox & Frey Associates; Mike North – Law Department; Marvin Krout - Wichita/Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department; Lucy Burtnett and Kathy Dittmer – Riverside Citizens Association; and Doug Kupper and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m. He introduced new Board members Janet Miller (District VI) and Glen Dey (District I) and asked them to make a few comments about their background and goals as board members.

Janet Miller commented that she lived in historic mid-town near Riverside Park. She said she had no specific agenda, but was interested in learning all she could and looking forward to public service. Glen Dey commented that he was retired from WSU. He said having just returned from Germany, he was impressed with the revitalization of the area since WW II in terms of planning green belts around cities. He added that he was also interested in the development of Grove Park.

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 11, 2001, were reviewed and approved.

1. **Riverside Park Improvements – Cost Estimates.** Director Kupper provided board members copies of the “Cost Summary” and “Cost Estimate” prepared by the park consultants Wilson Darnell Mann PA. He referred members to the \$8,470,180 total figure (\$9,317,198 with 10% contingency for cost overruns) in the Cost Summary. He reminded the Board that the entire project budget was \$5,000,000. He said the next issue will be to prioritize different plan elements. He commented that it had been suggested that a predominant amount of the budget be spent in Central Riverside, with a few exceptions in Oak Park, and that the remainder of the work be done with grants or additional Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funds.

Responding to a question from June Bailey, Director Kupper explained that “grasscrete” was a honeycomb concrete structure planted with grass that was used for temporary parking, but that it reverted back to green space when vehicles were not parked on it. He said it also holds up to heavy foot traffic during special events. He said the plan was to plant the grasscrete in fescue and irrigate it.

Director Kupper referred Board members to the "Cost Estimate". He commented that the infusion of art was a major part of every aspect of the project. He said some of the artwork might be financed through private donations. He specifically mentioned the sculptures included in the proposed strolling park to be located in the historic racetrack area. There was brief discussion concerning the different road options. President Mitchell said he did not recall work on the trails being part of the cost of the original plan and asked if those improvements could be funded through the path and trail system budget. Director Kupper stated that possibilities existed to apply for KDOT alternative transportation system funds. President Mitchell asked about the Murdock and Nims Roundabouts. Director Kupper commented that the roundabouts (or traffic circles) were entry features that would slow traffic down, alert the public that they were entering the "Riverside Park Complex", and cycle traffic within the park. President Mitchell commented that those were large dollar items out of a \$5,000,000 budget. Janet Miller asked if substituting and prioritizing items was an option. Director Kupper commented that items that would make the park more functional would be addressed first such as the run center and demolition of the stage area.

After brief discussion, it was the general consensus of the Board to meet jointly with the consultant and neighborhood associations in a workshop session before the next Park Board meeting.

On motion by Bailey, second by Robinson, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to schedule a joint meeting with the consultant, neighborhood associations and public.

2. **Update on Sleepy Hollow Park.** Director Kupper briefly reviewed the item commenting on the two meetings held by Wesley Medical Center regarding their proposed facility expansion, which could impact Sleepy Hollow Park. He referred board members to an aerial map of the park and surrounding area. He said the proposal was to use 15 feet of City right-of-way (ROW) and 5 feet of the park along Edgemont for diagonal parking. He said there would still be sufficient space to build a new playground at the park in its current location. As further review, he stated that the current hotel would be demolished and a new hotel built directly across from the park facing Rutan, adjacent to Edgemont.

Trix Niernberger asked for information on the comments made by the park neighbors at Thursday's meeting. Director Kupper stated that one of the major objections expressed by park neighbors at Thursday's meeting was moving the playground from its current location to the tree grove and open prairie area and the fact that "undesirables" migrate from the playground to that area. Responding to a question from Niernberger, Director Kupper said the neighbors defined "undesirables" as "teenagers and youth who go into the trees at the back of their homes and smoke cigarettes and stare into their bedroom windows." Niernberger also asked about proposed creek improvements to stop erosion and correct the drainage problems. Director Kupper said staff was working with Storm Water Management and that several options were being explored including biological plantings (grasses) along the creek banks and possible creek re-routing.

President Mitchell said one neighbor (Mr. Wall) specifically commented about teenagers smoking and urinating on his property. Mitchell said he did not hear comments about hotel patrons needing the park area and/or playground. Director Kupper commented that a few neighbors commented that they use the playground and added that Wesley Medical Center

has offered to replace the playground equipment and create a decorative low-retaining/seat wall along Edgemont.

- Hershel Skaggs – 3430 Sleepy Hollow – stated that 7 or 8 of the neighbors who attended Thursday's meeting requested that the playground remain in its current location. He said that it was troubling to the neighbors that the City and Park and Recreation Department were so willing to give up green space. He said 20 feet would be most of the green space on the south side of the park. He said it was also questionable whether Wesley needed the proposed parking and mentioned that there was a covered parking lot across the street. He commented that after living in the area for thirty years and watching development, he said the neighbors were "gun shy" of Wesley Medical Center in terms of what they say they will do and what they do. He commented that the neighbors did not want to see anything in the park disturbed.

Director Kupper clarified that the Board has made no recommendation yet on the proposal and that the Board has "gone on record" as recommending that parkland not be given up.

- Carl Finch, CEO, Wesley Medical Center – said he appreciated the neighborhood's concerns and indicated Wesley's willingness to work with the neighborhood, which was the reason for holding the two meetings. He said although the hospital has parking, the replacement hotel, which may be as small as 73 rooms, would require 73 parking spaces. In addition, he said the corner lot was the only land Wesley owned in the area. He said there has been some discussion regarding Wesley purchasing the property across Central; however, he said his fiduciary responsibilities precluded that purchase due to the price. He added that the building located on the property would probably be demolished because of asbestos. He said Wesley would be more than willing to provide new playground equipment. He also mentioned that removing the exercise stations that were in poor condition would create additional space.

Janet Miller asked how many parking spaces would be created by using the 20 feet? Staff estimated that approximately 22 spaces would be required, if the hotel remained at 73 rooms, and that approximately 30 spaces could be created for diagonal parking if both sides of the street were used. Finch commented that although the park may be smaller, there would be new playground equipment and fencing along Edgemont. He added that Wesley recognized that the hospital was a large business compared to what was otherwise a fairly quiet neighborhood; however, he said since the hospital has been at that location since 1912, they are simply running out of space.

There was brief discussion concerning the property south on Central. Finch indicated that the building was in terrible condition and there were also problems with the property title. Glen Dey asked about possible use of the park by hotel patrons. Finch indicated that hotel patrons don't request any amenities such as swimming pool, golf course, etc. He said they want an economical, clean place to stay while visiting/accompanying patients to the hospital. He said the current hotel location makes it easy for hotel patrons to walk to the hospital. He indicated that the hotel developer was a local developer who also designed and built Wichita Inns, Northrock Suites and Wichita Suites. He said although some developers might consider the hotel a risky project, the incentives were a

long-term lease and the fact that the developer did not have to acquire the land for the project.

Niernberger asked if the neighborhood association had voted on a unified position. Hershel Skaggs responded that the neighborhood group was just getting organized. Niernberger commented that at Sunday's meeting there appeared to be a lot of tension and issues between the neighborhood and the hospital. She said if the neighborhood association got organized, perhaps some of the issues could be worked out. Finch commented that other than the current proposal, Wesley has always built on land that it either owned or purchased.

Staff reviewed the following meeting dates for further discussion of the proposal. DAB on Monday, Jul 16, at 7:00 p.m. at Attwater Community Center; MAPC for rezoning request from General Commercial to Limited Commercial on Thursday, July 19 at 1:00 p.m., 10<sup>th</sup> floor Planning Conference Room; MAPC Subdivision Committee for the vacation of Rutan and Edgemont on Thursday, Jul 12, at 2:00 p.m., 10<sup>th</sup> floor Planning Conference Room. It was noted if the zoning request is denied on July 19, the Zoning Appeals Board meets on Tuesday, August 28.

3. **Update on Linwood Park.** Director Kupper stated that there has been quite a lot of citizen comment on the School Board's proposal to move Linwood Elementary School to Linwood Park. Niernberger asked for a review of the property deed issue. Director Kupper clarified that at the original meeting with a relative of Henry Schweiter, objections were raised concerning any construction in Linwood Park. He said the original park was platted at 40 acres and the family wanted to insure that the park remained at least that large. He commented that when the canal route was constructed in the 1950's the family donated additional platted lots to compensate for the land that was lost due to development of the canal route. He said the park is currently 65.4 acres and the school proposal would take between 4.3 to 4.8 acres. He said since that initial meeting more family members have gotten together to discuss the issue and it seems that although they object to North Linwood Park being used for the school site, construction in South Linwood Park may still be a viable option. He said it was a confusing scenario because there were arguments on both sides and that no final decision has been made on the proposal.

He read a letter from Donna Bradbury, 1110 Crowley, Wichita, KS 67216, dated July 9, 2001, opposing location of the school at Linwood Park. (See copy of letter attached as EXHIBIT A).

President Mitchell asked if a decision had been made about the possibility of locating the school in South Linwood Park. Fran Crowley said the school district has reviewed the possibility of using the North end of South Linwood Park. She reported that the Historic Preservation Board just voted to consider North Linwood Park for historic designation. She said the Board also wanted to find out which other City parks could be considered for historic designation in addition to looking at Work Progress Administration (WPA) projects. She said the School Board did not feel the South Linwood Park site was as desirable as North Linwood, due to increased traffic and no nearby residential neighbors; however, she said the site could work. She commented that in order to expand Linwood Elementary School at its current site, 10-12 houses would need to be demolished, and the School District did not feel

that was acceptable solution. President Mitchell mentioned that just as many people may be opposed to the South Linwood Park site.

- Lois Ann Newman – South Central Progressive Neighborhood Association – commented that her association has some definite ideas about taking parkland away from citizens. She stated that Linwood Park was a City park and not just a neighborhood park. She said if any land at Linwood Park is taken, the City will hear from the citizens.
- Joe Johnson – Shaefer, Johnson, Cox and Frey Associates, consultant, commented that the net affect to parkland would be an increase. He mentioned City acquisition of Wildwood Park and the Griffenstein school site as part of the package.

June Bailey clarified that it wasn't just a matter of giving up 4.8 acres at Linwood Park; that this was a way for the City to acquire parkland in other areas and neighborhoods in South Wichita that had no parks. She said throughout Wichita several schools were located adjacent to parks and that those partnerships worked. She said this proposal would not just affect the residents around Linwood Park and that the Board had a responsibility to look at the bigger picture of parkland citywide. She commented on the possibility of converting Henry Park to in-fill housing that would generate tax dollars. She said the playground equipment from Henry Park could be moved to the Linwood Elementary School site and, in addition, the neighborhood would be allowed to use the multi-purpose room at the school for meetings and other neighborhood uses. She concluded by saying that the Board has always stood firm on not giving up parkland, but added that she felt this was a "win-win" situation. President Mitchell confirmed that the Board had previously looked at developing a broader cooperation between the School District and the City on joint use of school and park sites.

There was brief discussion concerning action taken by the Historic Preservation Board. It was the general consensus of the Park Board that the Historic Preservation Board's action was not conclusive and that the request to designate Linwood North Park as an historic site would require City Council approval.

4. **Director's Update.** Director Kupper briefly reviewed the following items:

- Henry Park. Director Kupper reported that there might be some complications concerning sale of that parkland due to title restrictions.
- Herman Hill Park – Stripper Plant. Director Kupper gave a brief overview of project progress to date referring board members to a new conceptual drawing of the water treatment plant. He said it was estimated that approximately 1.6 million gallons of water would be treated per day. He commented that there would be a water feature and that a plan was also being explored to pump water across the Arkansas to Watson Park to be used for irrigation and establishment of a fresh water trout pond.
- Cell Tower at Herman Hill Park. Director Kupper reported on the construction of a 125-foot cell phone tower near the Police Substation in Herman Hill Park. Janet Miller commented that if variances were required for construction, the Park Board should have been consulted. President Mitchell inquired who received the income from the tower?

- Playground Equipment Program. Director Kupper commented that approximately \$695,000 has been budgeted for replacement of playground equipment over the next year, which should cover about 20 playgrounds. He added that another 40 areas were being added to the list.
- Land Water and Conservation Fund. Director Kupper reported that staff received a grant in the amount of \$81,000 (original request was for \$50,000; however, the State awarded \$31,000 in additional funds) for development of the adult soccer fields at 33<sup>rd</sup> St. and Ohio St.

Trix Niernberger requested information on soccer issues. She said she saw a terribly one-sided story on Channel 10 about what the Park and Recreation Department was doing to youth soccer leagues.

Director Kupper briefly explained that it costs the City between \$200,000 - \$250,000 annually to maintain the 17 soccer fields at South Lakes Park. He said Sedgwick County Soccer pays \$5,000 a season for rental of all 17 fields. He said in addition they also generate funds from hosting various soccer tournaments. He said the City was attempting to negotiate a per player fee structure that would be fair and equitable to the leagues and also assist the City to offset some maintenance costs. He briefly described the differences between the Sedgwick County Soccer League and the American Youth Soccer Association, with regard to officials, uniforms, in-kind services, volunteers, type of play (professional vs. recreational), etc. He said the City originally proposed a \$10 per child fee; Sedgwick County Soccer countered with \$2.00 per child and the City has countered with a \$7.00 per child fee, which was approximately a 10% cost recovery.

There was brief discussion concerning the City's football leagues, which were operated by the Park and Recreation Department. Responding to a question from Bailey, Director Kupper stated that it cost between \$250-\$280 per child to participate in the City's football league. He briefly explained that the City paid for uniforms, awards, and officials. Bailey mentioned that the soccer fee situation has been an on-going issue for years.

Trix Niernberger commented that she would like to see the City respond to the issue. Director Kupper commented that Channel 3 had contacted him, but he said he would rather wait until negotiations were completed before speaking to the press. He indicated that he had prepared information for the City Manager and City Council concerning the issues. There was brief discussion concerning lack of play at the Stryker Soccer Field Complex. Director Kupper mentioned that the department did not necessarily want to establish a City soccer league.

- Fire in Oak Park. President Mitchell reported that there was a fire in Oak Park on July 4. He provided pictures to Director Kupper for follow-up. Kathy Dittmer stated that a stolen car had been set on fire at the park. President Mitchell also mentioned that the park gate was down. He further commented that the well pump at the Lily Pond was not working, and as a result, the area was a disgrace. Director Kupper suggested that repair of the well pump be addressed under the Riverside Park System plan.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:30 p.m.

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M.S. Mitchell, President

ATTEST:

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Maryann Crockett, Clerk  
Recording Secretary

**EXHIBIT A**

July 9, 2001

To: Doug Kupper, Director of Parks and Recreation, and the Parks Advisory Board

From: Donna Bradbury, 1110 Crowley, Wichita, KS 67216

Re: the possible reallocation of Linwood Park property

I understand the need for a new Linwood Elementary School building and the dilemma those planners have. However, I am opposed to any use of Linwood Park grounds for a school building. Linwood is the only established and beautiful park in south central Wichita. Its shelter and theater area offer unique opportunities to all of Wichita's citizens. To diminish the remaining open area would be a shame.

This park has been affected by major street and thoroughfare construction; please do not do further damage to it.

Future park needs, future school district needs or cooperation between the two entities should not be any part of this issue. Rather, they should be addressed and evaluated on their own merit. There is nothing comparable to Linwood Park with which the school district can negotiate.

The historical significance of this park should have negated these conversations with the school district every having started.

I appreciate your careful consideration of the matter; please protect Linwood Park!

(SIGNED)

Thank you for your attention –

Donna Bradbury